and VOICE respectively. The F1 key has the function of a HELP key and the F10 key a menu command function. The operator may thus also activate the voice-command state of the VOICE program by pressing the FN and F9 keys at the same time.

In the VOICE program, the keys F3–F8 double up for the RW, PAUSE, STOP, REC, PLAY and FF keys on the lid **33** so as to define the same operational conditions which can be preset by the keys **97**, while the lid **33** is in its open configuration. The corresponding operative states of the unit **34** will be displayed in the positions I, VII and VIII on the mode indicator **46**, with the same symbols already described in connection with the keys **97**.

With reference to FIGS. **1**, **4** and **5** the keys have a 14 mm pitch, approximately. It results clear that the plane of the keyboard **36** has a first (front) fraction and a second (rear) fraction. The alphanumeric and control keys of the keyboard **36** fully take the first fraction of the keyboard plane in the base unit **32** which represents a little more than 50% of the minor side in the keyboard plane. The numbers keyboard **134** takes a lateral portion of the rear fraction of the keyboard plane and will result adjacent to the mode indicator **46**.

The numeric keyboard **134** comprises four rows of keys, each one of four keys. Therefore the layout of all the keys of the keyboard **36** will simulate very close the layout of the keys in a standard PC (apart from the difference in the position of the numeric keyboard **134**), in spite of the limited dimensions of the computer **31** (210×148 mm).

The hard disk unit (HDU) **84** is of a thin profile type for disks of 2,5" and the numeric keyboard **134** results offset with respect to the unit **84**. A portion of the side **42** of the base unit **32** projects upwardly with respect to the keyboard plane **136** and the speaker **104** lies on the projecting portion of the side **142** for a space optimization of the base unit **32**.

It is understood that the portable computer **31** may undergo various changes and improvements, with respect to both shape and arrangements of the various parts, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

What I claimed is:

1. A portable computer comprising:
- a base unit having an upper surface and a hinge edge;
- a lid having a hinge edge hinged on the corresponding hinge edge of said base unit:
- an electronic unit housed in said base unit and capable of assuming various operational states;
- an input unit for controlling said electronic unit;
- a display screen carried by said lid and controlled by said electronic unit to display graphics symbols and alphanumeric characters over several lines; and
- a mode indicator carried by said base unit, for displaying characters and symbols indicating different operational states of the computer, said mode indicator comprising a display panel smaller in size than said display screen and adjacent to said hinge edge of said base unit;
- wherein said lid can be moved between a closed configuration and an open configuration and in its open configuration allows access to the input unit and enables said display screen to be seen;
- wherein a viewing zone is provided adjacent to said hinge edge of said lid, external to said display screen, so that said mode indicator is visible with said lid in its closed configuration, so that said display panel can still be seen when said lid is in its open configuration, and
- wherein said lid comprises two side sections which project from its hinge edge so as to engage with two corresponding side sections which project from said base unit and said viewing zone comprises a bay between said side sections which project from said base unit.

2. A portable computer according to claim **1**, wherein said display panel is inclined at an angle of 30 relative to said upper surface of said base unit.

3. A portable computer according to claim **1** or **2**, wherein said display panel is partially housed in said bay in the open and closed configurations of said lid.

4. A portable computer comprising:
- a base unit having an upper surface;
- a lid hinged on said upper surface;
- an electronic unit housed in said base unit and capable of assuming various operational states;
- an input unit for controlling said electronic unit;
- a display screen carried by said lid and controlled by said electronic unit to display graphics symbols and alphanumeric characters over several lines;
- a mode indicator carried by said base unit, for displaying characters and symbols indicating different operational states of the computer; and
- keys for presetting operational states of the computer;
- wherein said lid can be moved between a closed configuration and an open configuration and in its open configuration allows access to the input unit and enables the display screen to be seen;
- wherein a viewing zone is provided in the lid, external to the display screen, so that the mode indicator is visible with the lid in its closed configuration;
- wherein the mode indicator is smaller in size than the display screen, and
- wherein said keys are carried in a surface of said lid which is accessible from outside in said closed configuration of said lid.

5. A portable computer according to claim **4**, wherein said keys carried in said lid comprise the PLAY, FF, STOP, RW, REC and PAUSE keys substantially aligned with each other.

6. A portable computer according to claim **5**, wherein said keys are aligned parallel to an edge of said base unit and at a distance from said edge wherein they may be actuated using fingers of a hand holding said computer.

7. A portable computer comprising:
- a base unit having an upper surface;
- a lid hinged on said upper surface;
- an electronic unit housed in said base unit and capable of assuming various operational states;
- an input unit for controlling said electronic unit;
- a display screen carried by said lid and controlled by said electronic unit to display graphics symbols and alphanumeric characters over several lines;
- a mode indicator carried by said base unit, for displaying characters and symbols indicating different operational states of the computer;
- a voice input/output unit;
- selection means for selecting a voice-command state of the computer for processing verbal commands;
- presetting means for presetting various operational conditions of said electronic unit in a voice-command state; and
- a memory for storing verbal commands;
- wherein said lid can be moved between a closed configuration and an open configuration and in its